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ABSTRACT

Preparing teachers to incorporate technology into teaching is a requirement in teacher education. Using a course Web site as an instructional method expands students' understanding of technology applications. One aspect of a course Web site particularly suited to facilitating and improving learning is a discussion area (bulletin board) where students post comments related to course content and process. Electronic bulletin boards offer students such opportunities as: responding after a self-determined wait time; responding thoughtfully and without interruption; reading peer contributions and reflecting before responding; and dialoguing directly with peers. Instructors benefit from opportunities to: foster student dialogue; observe and analyze content from student discussions; assess students' thought processes and comprehension; and elicit feedback. Written scripts of Web site discussions can serve as tools to enhance instructors' understanding of each student's perspective. An appendix presents a sample bulletin board discussion conducted as part of an educational psychology course at Wright State University, Ohio. The comments reveal a pervasive student belief that teaching is an innate gift predicated upon certain personality traits rather than theories and skills one can learn to become a teacher. Motivating the students to use the Web site was challenging, though setting up the Web site was relatively easy. (SM)

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Incorporating a Course Website into Teaching: A Promising Practice, Especially for Teacher Education

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October 2000

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Incorporating a Course Website into Teaching: A Promising Practice, Especially for Teacher Education

Preparing teachers to incorporate technology into their teaching is a requirement in teacher education. Technology has changed the ways human beings relate to one another, the nature of work, and the development of knowledge. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) published the guide Technology and the New Professional Teacher: Preparing for the 21st Century Classroom (Cooper, 1997) to assist and direct teacher preparation programs toward greater incorporation and appropriate uses of technology in teaching. The Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) established a set of ten principles for beginning teachers that have been adopted by several states as goals or standards for teachers in all disciplines and all grade levels (Darling-Hammond, 1992). Three of the ten standards relate to the use of technology to enhance instruction and learning: Standard Three- Adapting Instruction for Individual Needs, Standard Four – Multiple Instructional Strategies, and Standard Six- Communication Skills.

Incorporating technology into preservice education has frequently been accomplished by requiring students to take two or three courses in which they learn basic technology skills to assist with classroom administration tasks and instruction. While beneficial, these courses often transpire as a separate sequence, completely disconnected from the more traditional content courses in preservice education programs of study. That is not to say that there aren't technologically proficient teacher educators using technology to present material in interesting and informative ways. Many also require students to use various forms of technology for classroom presentations. However, the technology applications are predominantly employed to deliver instruction rather than to modify the cognitive processes involved in learning. Few teacher educators are using technology as an instructional method by which learners modify their current understandings and construct new knowledge. Using a course website as an instructional method expands students' understandings of technology applications beyond simply presenting instruction to learning from and through technology.

One aspect of a course website particularly well-suited to facilitating and improving learning is a discussion area, also know as a bulletin board, where students post comments related to course content and process. Making a discussion area or bulletin board available for comments encourages students to engage in thoughtful reflection about important teaching and learning issues, and to express their ideas to fellow students. Contrary to the fears that using technology creates a sense of isolation, a discussion/bulletin board can actually help students feel more connected to the instructor and to fellow students. A website discussion area serves as one more line of communication in rapport building, supplementing rather than replacing the more traditional verbal and non-verbal paths. Students feel valued because ideas raised in class discussions, which did not get fully explored in the allocated class time, can be addressed on the bulletin board and discussed at greater length. At the same time, issues that interest only a few students need not monopolize limited class discussion time because students know they can be pursued on the bulletin board.

In the flow of traditional class discussions, time and divided attentions frequently do not afford students the opportunity to participate with insight and depth of understanding. Nor does the instructor have the opportunity to gain insight into each student's level of comprehension and personal philosophy. Using a website discussion board addresses both of these issues in ways that benefit students and the instructor. Student benefits include: a). self-determined wait time before responding, b). the opportunity to respond thoughtfully without interruptions, c). opportunities to read peer contributions and reflect upon them before responding, and d). unlimited opportunities to dialogue directly with fellow students (learning from one another) rather than addressing discussion comments to the instructor, as often occurs in class settings. Instructor benefits include: a). opportunities to foster student to student dialogue, b). opportunities to continue thoughtful dialogue about important issues raised in class, c). opportunities to "observe and analyze" the content of student discussions rather than simply moderate, d). opportunities to assess students' thought processes and comprehension for formative purposes, and e). opportunities to elicit feedback throughout the course.

Written scripts of website discussions can serve as tools to enhance the instructor's understanding of each student's perspective. These scripts from the website

bulletin board can be printed to evaluate instruction and learning, aid in modifying course content, or as data for action research. Individual student comments can be analyzed to assess the students' understanding of an issue, to determine comprehension, or lend insight into their philosophy of education. Specific or pervasive misunderstandings, which might otherwise go undetected, may also be identified and addressed appropriately. In this sense, using the technology of a website improves class communication, cohesion, discussion quality, and assessment.

Appendix A includes a series of student comments from a bulletin board discussion conducted as part of an educational psychology course at Wright State University last year. These comments were selected for this paper because they reveal a pervasive student belief that teaching is an innate gift predicated upon certain personality traits rather than theories and skills one can learn to become a teacher. The highlighted comments on these ten discussion pages reveal the pervasiveness of this belief and the personality traits identified as essential to teaching: love, concern for students, patience, flexibility, ability to relate to children, dedication, creativity, a good sense of humor, and empathy. None of the students' discussion area comments suggested that these traits could be taught or learned. One student specifically identified analytical skills as unimportant in teaching. Many students included the notion that learning good teaching skills and strategies would enhance the natural born teacher's teaching but would be of little value if the person did not possess the gift for teaching. These views are critical for understanding this group of students and had not surfaced during previous in-class discussions.

The students' bulletin board comments on this topic suggested they held fixed notions of human abilities based upon genetic personality traits; a belief about innate human conditions likely to influence their expectations of students. Once this belief was revealed on the discussion board, class material was selected to move students in the direction of more fully recognizing the role family and cultural influences have on human development, and the potentially negative impact too much emphasis on innate abilities and limitations could have on children. The analysis of the content of this bulletin board discussion enabled future class meetings to more directly address the specific needs of this particular group of students.

Motivating students to use the website proved to be a challenge. Initial voluntary participation by students was low, with less that 50% of the students accessing the site. Students reported difficulty accessing the site due to time constraints and lack of off-campus Internet access. During the second half of the quarter, a bonus point system for discussion responses was added and participation increased to 80%. However, 100% participation only occurred the following quarter when a specific set of required entries were incorporated into the grading system for the course. The theory that once the students experienced the benefits of the discussion board method they would be more likely to voluntarily participate did not hold. Some students produced the minimum discussion board requirements and never took advantage of bonus points or the opportunity to be heard. However, students who rarely contributed in class discussions did post comments on the bulletin board in response to their peers' comments. This served to validate the merit of offering the website as an additional method of learning.

Setting up the website was fairly simple. The publisher of the adopted course text offered website access for choosing the text. Many publishers are now offering this service when a text is adopted. They provide the site and an instructor access code, along with templates for ease in organizing course information. Some publishing representatives will even visit your office to help with the initial set-up or trouble-shooting. More technologically accomplished instructors have the option of creating their own website using software available on most campuses. Many software packages no longer require the instructor to actually know html code. Some publishers' main websites offer information and step-by-step guidelines for setting up a course website, and provide hyperlinks to related resources, presentation slides for each chapter of the text, and supplemental bibliographies.

The website used for this study was constructed in about 90 minutes. The students were given the web address and access code on the syllabus and walked through the process during the first day of class. Once they registered to use the website, they had full access to the material on the site, from instructor information, course goals and objectives to the course syllabus, assignments, and discussion board. In addition, notices about class meetings and assignment reminders could be posted on the opening page of the site to expedite basic communication between the instructor and students.

Incorporating a course website into teaching is a promising practice, especially for teacher education. In addition to enhanced communication between the instructor and students, the discussion board section can be especially useful in encouraging on-going dialogue between students. Discussion board comments can be printed in a script format to provide a written record of students' thought processes, comprehension, and beliefs about teaching and learning, both for formative assessment and action research purposes. Motivating all students to use the course website as a method of learning may be a challenge unless access and use is a required aspect of the course. However, some students respond better to course content, participate more in discussion, and learn material more effectively via the course website. Setting up a website can be accomplished in a few hours with the assistance of a text publisher or by using readily available software. Once established, a course website and discussion area can serve as an excellent teaching method, offering insight into students and the learning process.

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Darling-Hammond, L. (Ed) (1992). Model standards for beginning teacher licensing and development: A resource for state dialogue. Unpublished draft. Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium. Council of Chief State School Officers, Washington, D.C.

APPENDIX A

PageOut

Author **Topic: Is teaching a gift or can anyone learn to do it well?**

jlindseynorth posted 04-30-00 10:44 AM ET (US)

Do you think that some people are "natural born teachers" and others "will never get it"? Or do you think that good teaching can be taught? What makes a person a "great teacher"? Up to 5 bonus points are available for thoughtful answers- all opinions welcomed!

posted 04-30-00 08:16 PM ET (US)

In response to the discussion question is teaching a gift or can anyone learn to do it well, my answer is yes to both. Some people are born to teach. They share their knowledge and past experiences with people even if they are not teachers in the traditional sense.(Policemen who teach D.A.R.E. programs in schools,former drug abusers who share their past experience with students and your parents who are giving of their time and energies to help improve the school by tutoring students. These people do it out of love and concern for people.)A good teacher can be taught the methods of teaching and how to handle a class room. A good teacher will share their knowledge with the class and a good teacher will leave school every day feeling that they have completed their task. A great teacher will create a safe and loving environment where students can feel free to voice their own thoughts, be creative and enjoy the process of learning. A great teacher will share their knowledge but when asked a question that they do not know will keep the issue alive until the question is answered. A great teacher will leave class at the end of the day feeling like they made a difference in a childs life.

posted 04-30-00 08:31 PM ET (US)

I would have to say yes to both also. I think that we are all capable of teaching to a certain degree, although our methods may not be as effective as others. To be a teacher though, I think there are a few qualities that the person will want to have in order to make the experience of teaching enjoyable. A teacher will want to be patient, not all children learn at the same speed or in the same way. You will want to be flexible, it does you no good to try to hammer in the math facts if the children are all worked up about spring, instead go count the flowers! A teacher will want to be able to relate to children, they have a different way of seeing the world and it is important that a teacher talks to that level and slowly introduces other more complex views. A love for life and for children is probably another thing that a teacher will want to have. These things will make the experience more enjoyable and meaningful for the teacher and the students, but it is not required. Any person can sit in the classes that we sit in, they can be programed what to say.... but will they enjoy teaching? Will their children enjoy learning??

posted 04-30-00 09:22 PM ET (US)

I believe that effective teaching is a gift! I think anyone can learn the methods of teaching and possibly how to "control" a classroom, but there's so much more to teaching. Someone told me that my students will never care how much I know until they know how much I care. That's true in so many areas of life. What I feel makes a person a great teacher is love and dedication. Anyone can enter a first grade classroom and teach the students how to add 10+20, but what happens if one of the students doesn't understand. A great teacher will work with individuals to make sure they are doing their very best. A great teacher will constantly be thinking about what she can do to make every student in her classroom feel safe, respected, appreciated, and valued. I also feel

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a great teacher will have a fervent desire to see that every student leaves her class with a better understanding of themselves, other people, and the world that they live in.

posted 05-01-00 12:21 AM ET (US)

Teaching is.....
Patience
Hard work
Respect
Demanding
Creative
Emotional

Discipline
Motivation
Frustration
Knowledge
Trust
Consuming
Fulfilling!!!!!

This is just a different way of emphasizing what I think being a great teacher entails. Basically, I think a great teacher is a person who makes teaching one of their top priorities, but not their only priority! A great teacher also knows exactly what they are getting themself into before they take the plunge. I am sure everyone has had at least one teacher in their lifetime who acted like they totally despised what they were doing! These type of teachers were not born to be teachers. I think there are natural instincts you must have to teach, such as, patience and creativity. However, there are many characteristics you can learn through experience and hard work, such as knowledge and trust. Once you gain these types of traits, and learn how to apply them to your teaching methods, I belive you can become a great teacher!

posted 05-01-00 07:28 AM ET (US)

I think that some people are born with the skill of helping children. If it might be with teaching or being in a "Big Sister" or "Big brother" program. No matter what proffession you are in you still have to work at it. Things change everyday in the education field. That's why teachers have to keep up their certification. Anyone can be taught how to do something but some will never be good at it. It's like the old saying how youcan teach and reteach but some people are never going to get it. The best qualities that I see in a teacher is patience with the kids, being able to teach from their level, and having the attitude that you are there for them. The one thing that I do not like to see other teachers do is have the attitude that they can't be bothered. Some teachers have that attitude and the kids sense that and then they think that it's a pain for them to ask questions. That is one of the qualitites that I do not want to see in a teacher but we do. The kids need to feel like they belong in the classroom and the teachers need to make that happen. One of the things that I see happening is that as future teachers we are made to pass all of these tests. Yes, that's fine. However, there are people out there that do have a gift to help kids but can't pass the tests. We need to make sure that future teachers can pass the tests but also be able to interact with the kids and teach on their levels.

posted 05-01-00 09:52 AM ET (US)

In resopnse to the question posted, I believe that good teachers have a gift that is instictual. It is just like a good doctor. Anyone can work hard and become a doctor, but a good doctor is someone who is caring, sympathetic, and enjoys what they do. It is the same thing for a teacher. Anyone can learn the skills, but it is how you apply them with creativity, and love that makes a teacher good. So, I guess my answer would be that a great teacher is someone who loves children, works hard with each student, puts in the work outside of the classroom, is knowledgable about the content area, and is caring

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and sympathetic to all. Those things cannot be taught. Teaching is instinctual, at least it is for me.

posted 05-01-00 10:52 AM ET (US)

I agree with Rachel that teaching is a gift.
Anyone who is reasonably intelligent can be taught theories and methods, but some individuals seem to have an innate ability to get things across effectively and relate easily to students. I also feel children at any age inherently know who genuinely cares about them. They will respond more favorably to a teacher who they feel has their best interests at hand and to a teacher who is caring and compassionate. I think with experience we all become better teachers, but there is a select group who can really reach their students and they make great teachers.

posted 05-01-00 01:41 PM ET (US)

A good beginning to this discussion. Keep those ideas coming! A second response that contributes significantly to your original response will be worth points as well!

posted 05-01-00 04:48 PM ET (US)

I guess I could elaborate some more on what makes a great teacher. In addition to having the ability to reach the kids, I think a great teacher understands people, exerts that little bit of extra effort or goes the extra mile for his/her students, is enthusiastic and therefore transmits that enthusiasm to his students, knows how to create interest in the material and make learning fun, and has a GOOD sense of humor!!

posted 05-01-00 05:51 PM ET (US)

Yes, I think some people are born with the ability to teach while others may never get it! I think that teachers that are passionate about their work and express it have a natural ability to teach. One does not learn this in college. The desire to want to share every ounce of ones knowledge, experiences and enthusiasm for learning with others is what separates a great teacher from just a "a teacher". You can acquire some of the necessary skills of teaching by being taught the methods, theories, concentration subject matter, etc. however, these alone do not make a great teacher. A great teacher has a strong desire to identify and meet each students individual needs in the short time allowed. By setting such a challenging goal and striving to meet it everyday, the children will be able to see the dedication and motivation as well. Children are very perceptive to a teachers lack of interest in them and this can effect the learning in the classroom.

posted 05-01-00 06:53 PM ET (US)

I believe that everyone, in someway and at some time or another, is a teacher. I feel that it is hard to say exactly what it takes to be a good teacher, because I believe that everyone has qualities that lead to a good teacher and everyone has areas that need improvement when it comes to being a teacher. I have had teachers that had wonderful social skills, but when it came to imparting knowledge they didn't have a clue!!! I have also had teachers who were great at teaching their subject matter, but students were scared to death to approach them after class. Some are better at teaching morals; some are better at teaching discipline; some just naturally inspired people to try to be better. But the thing is, I have been able to learn from each and every one of them. I believe, honestly, that different skills are needed in different teaching situations. A teacher who is perfect in one school, with one group of kids, might be totally lost in another school with another group of kids. For instance, my husband was asked to teach the 14 year-old Sunday school class at my church. Now, my husband would never consider being a professional teacher, but for some reason he is what those kids need. He would be lost in an elementary school, but he is able to connect with those kids in his class. He has skills that I would like to acquire in order to be a better teacher for junior high kids, but that are not particularly necessary when teaching the first grade. I have skills that he

would need to acquire if he set out to teach the first grade!!! But my point is, I believe that everyone is a born teacher, but that everyone is also born with different talents, some of which are more compatible with certain types of teaching enviornments. Know what I mean? (I'm afraid I did not "teach" that very well!! ☺)
-Lesley ☺

posted 05-01-00 09:05 PM ET (US)

I agree with most that have posted previously. Teaching is a gift as are so many other callings that one may gain through experience within their lifetime. While filling out a personality questionairre the other day, I told my husband that he too should do the test. He told me that he was born a mechanical engineer, and any other answer would be wrong. There is one thing that those kinds of tests can not sense. Passion and compassion is what makes any teacher a successful and effective teacher. It is really what makes anyone successful no matter what their goal in life, I believe. Many people can learn facts and simply transmit the information. The job of a teacher, however, should be somewhat altruistic and should involve much more than facts, theories and concepts. A teacher must also have the desire to teach life itself. That, I think, is what only a few ever really achieve or even have the ability to achieve.

posted 05-01-00 09:18 PM ET (US)

I agree with Georgia and Rachel, I feel that teaching is a gift and not everyone can attempt it successfully. When I was in high school, I had several teachers that I dreaded having in class. They taught what they wanted, how they wanted and when they wanted to. They never came down to the same level as their students and showed any type of concern or care. I feel that some people begin teaching because they want too, but get burnt out really quick, especially this time of year, and they never juice up their curriculum for the next year, so they carry that burn out with them everyday, possibly in the personl life. Even though they may have been taught by some of the best, they were not blessed with the gift of being a great teacher. No matter how hard I try and try, I will never be a great ice skater, even though my goals are set, my heart may never put me in that position. Same with teaching, we have to have heart and dedication in order to be great at teaching. It has to be like a passion in order to endure the daily hardships we are faced with. Even though we are having a bad day, we have to remember we are going to see and model for some twenty or more kids a day and they look to us as role models and assume that we will always have a smile on our face, too help them get through the day as well. If an individual is not a people person like I remember some of my teachers being, they are going to give off the wrong impression and students will not turn to them as a great teacher who they can seek advice from, were making our own bed!

posted 05-01-00 09:40 PM ET (US)

I agree with Georgia. Kids do know who actually cares about them and who is just "counting down the years to retirement." I believe that it has been proven by research that kids do better and want to be involoved with the material if the teacher takes interest in them and the material. I believe that Ms. Gonzales said it best. There are some people out there that are going to become great teachers and then some are going to become great educators. I never really understood the difference to an educator and a teacher. To me, anyone can teach a child to do something. There are only a handful of people that will educate their students.

posted 05-02-00 08:57 AM ET (US)

I do think that some people are natural teachers. I think a person's personality has strengths and weakness and some are more conducive to teaching. For example, empathy and listening skills can improve with technique training, but some people have those traits naturally. I also think intuition is very important and some people have it, but that can't be taught. Analytical skills are important in engineering professions but not

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teaching. Thet too can be taught, but it comes more naturally for some people.

posted 05-02-00 09:26 AM ET (US)

I have to say that I definitely agree with the others that teaching is a gift, but I also think that one of the reasons we are in this class is to perfect this gift that we have chosen as our career paths. Those of us that have a genuine interest in teaching do need guidance so that we can become great teachers. I think that in order to become a great teacher, you have to have a stong ability to lead others, whether it be across a stream or across an ocean. A great teacher needs to be able to relate to her/his students, be compassionate to the needs of every individual student in their classroom, be a role model to their students, and understand that teaching requires a great deal of patience and hard work.

posted 05-02-00 10:28 AM ET (US)

For the most part, I believe that some people were born with a special gift or talent for teaching others. However, this does not mean that since there are these "natural born teachers," there is no room for others to learn good teaching skills and strategies. I think individuals who are naturally driven to teach possess characteristics that make them ideal for a career in education. These teachers are committed to students and their learning, are intuitive, spontaneous, creative, active, and they value students. Natural born teachers also love children and have a strong desire to impart knowledge to others. In a way, I don't feel that these characteristics of a person born to teach can be developed. You either love children or you don't particularly like working with them in a cooperative environment. In the past, I have often asked myself how some people decided to choose teaching as a career. So I guess I would agree that some people "will never get it" because first of all, they don't seem to enjoy working with children and secondly,they are not enthusiastic about their subject fields. I think these are people who fell back on teaching when a career as an engineer or scientist in a lab didn't work out. My high school calculus teacher is an example of the person who "will never get it." He just didn't seem to enjoy teaching and as a class, we all knew that he didn't care if we learned a single thing all year. It came as no shock to us, then, when his contract was not renewed and he later took a position in an engineering field. He just didn't have the desire to teach and it was evident that he also did not possess the "people skills" (communication, caring, empathy, promoting teamwork, accepting diversity) necessary to being an effective teacher.

Even though I believe that some people are just naturally blessed with an ability to reach out and teach students, I still think that good teaching can be taught. I sure hope it can because if it can't, I'm wasting my time with all of these classes in college. Good teaching requires a person with a lively personality as well as an individual who wants to build student's self-worth. Another key element of good teachers is that they do not quit in spite of adversity and they rise up to meet challenges. They are willing and able to adapt their classrooms to tailor to the preferences of each individual student. Good teachers must first have a mastery of the subjects they are going to teach. Moreover, they must know how to teach these subjects so that students with all different learning styles will be stimulated to understand and retain the material.

So basically, I think good teachers possess certain qualilties that make them excel in the classroom. Their personalities allow them to be the types of teachers that earn the respect and admiration of their students. If you add the fact that they are very educated, intelligent, and resourceful in the specific subject matter they teach (math, English, science), then you will have a person who is a "great teacher." So I think a combination of personality characteristics that I do not think can be instilled in a person, but can be cultivated, and a knowledge of subject matter is what it takes to make a great teacher. Most of us in this class would agree that we have the desire to teach and we love working with children. Our basic reason for taking college classes is that we are trying to expand our horizons by learning the subject matter and the best approaches to teaching the material to students.

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[This message has been edited by s001jka (edited 05-02-00).]

[This message has been edited by s001jka (edited 05-02-00).]

posted 05-02-00 11:07 AM ET (US)

I just wanted to add that I think it is becoming increasingly important for teachers to assume the responsibility of being professionals. My definition of professional is a little different than what our textbook qualifies as being conducive to professionals. While I agree that teachers should be considered professionals because they make informed, independent decisions and judgments about their work, think critically, and seek out ways to solve problems that are unique to their field, I also think professionals require a certain amount of authority. While I think it is fine for teachers to be friendly and compassionate towards their students, I think for the most part, teachers cannot be seen merely as friends. As soon as teachers become friends and start gossipping about other students or issues affecting the school, most students start losing respect for them and these teachers are no longer seen as authority figures. I am an advocate of teacher as a facilitator in the classroom, but let's not forget that teachers, to a certain degree, are disciplinarians. Becoming too closely affiliated with my students would only make me lose control over my classroom and I would lose the respect of my students, other teachers, and the administration. So I think another attribute of the great teacher is that he or she strikes a balance between being too strict and running the classroom like its a prison and being too lenient and only counseling children about their problems without remembering that students are in their classrooms to learn.

[This message has been edited by s001jka (edited 05-02-00).]

[This message has been edited by s001jka (edited 05-02-00).]

posted 05-02-00 01:58 PM ET (US)

I think that not all people would make good teachers. There are some people who lack the patience and understanding that it takes to be a teacher. I have seen many teachers and been taught buy some that will never make good teachers. I think it is something that you have to be somewhat gifted with. But I feel that all professions are like this. Not all people have the ability to be a doctor either. There are just so many things about being a teacher that can not be taught. Most of it is experience and patience. Through my observations I have realized that I need a lot more time in the classroom and that I will get better at teaching. However I feel comfortable in front of the class. I enjoy it and I feel that I have the something that it takes, but I feel that not everyone has that gift.

posted 05-02-00 02:08 PM ET (US)

I feel that teaching is the most wonderful gift that can be given. The ability to make people learn is something that everyone doesn't have. It is either you got it or you don't. You don't want someone teaching your children that kind of has a way to get the information through to the children. You need someone who has the God-given talent that can present information to any child's learning style, and lead them to success. Not everyone can do that. Just like some people become engineers. There is no way that I could do that. I feel that that is to complicated But, teaching children, well, that comes easy to me. I love to see the light in their eyes when you teach them something new. Teaching is a gift, not an option!

posted 05-02-00 02:44 PM ET (US)

I personally think that teaching is a gift yet I do believe that someone can learn to become a better teacher by attending classes or by talking to other teachers who have good ideas that work for them! - There are a lot of things that go into teaching! - I think

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that a teacher must be someone who is caring, interesting, and dedicated! - I think the most important of these three is dedication! - If the teacher is not dedicated, then how can the students be interested in what they are learning! - I think a great teacher is open-minded about the different learning styles of their students, and I believe they will go to any extremes to help their students in the classroom! - That is why I believe that teaching is a gift! - Though I believe some people can learn to teach, without the dedication, they will not make and effective teacher! - I don't believe that just anyone can learn to do it well! - Some just aren't made for teaching!!

posted 05-02-00 08:55 PM ET (US)

I believe that teaching is indeed a gift. It doesn't take a brain surgeon to learn how to teach addition or any subject to children. Teaching to the mind is not hard, if you have learned the "hows" of teaching. But teaching to every aspect of the child is. One can be the most intelligent person with a 4.0 in their education classes and do a fair job of teaching but not love the job or the children unconditionally. There is a world of difference between a good teacher and a great teacher. To me, a good teacher is one who arrives everyday on time, teaches just what they should, and leaves. A great teacher is one who not only gives of themselves and their time, but inspires, encourages, loves, and sees potential (and teach to it) in every child. It is the great teachers that you remember, it is the great teachers that made the difference in your life-either by being there as a "teacher" or as a friend. A good teacher is glad when you are in class, a great teacher worries when you aren't in class but rejoices when you are. A good teacher does what it takes to receive the paycheck and passes the routine principal inspections. A great teacher goes above and beyond the call of duty, in spite of the size of the check. The best sign of a great teacher? When even one child comes back to you and says, "you were the one that made the difference in my life".

posted 05-02-00 10:23 PM ET (US)

I agree with most of the responses. Teaching is a gift that comes naturally to some. This gift allows the teacher to show the students she cares for them and this makes them feel special. I have always enjoyed seeing the smile on the face of a child I have been talkig with or helping. It is important to make sure you help the students feel special and help build their self-esteem. I have had some loser teachers (one is a math teacher from wsu and my husband taught me more than this teacher ever did), good teachers (one's who explain the information to the point where you know what is expected of you), and great teachers (one's who explain the information to the point where you know what is expected of you and when you achieve your goal the teacher will give you positive feedback). The great teacher's I've had have helped me make some of the decisions I have made in my life.

posted 05-03-00 09:53 AM ET (US)

I think that teaching is a gift. Just like people are called to be a minister or preacher, people are called to be teachers. I'm not saying however that there are people out there who can't "train" to become one, but it helps if teaching comes naturally. There are many teachers who are able to go through the system that shouldn't have made it, but to become a teacher, a lot of it is "book" work. There are many people who are smart enough to get through the classes, but have no business being in a classroom. I also beleive that there are many people who would be great teachers, but struggle with school and so will never be able to fill much needed positions as qualified teachers. There has to be a connection between teacher and students, I've had teachers in high school who were far from connected witht he kids, and it was those classes that I had a more difficult time.
Being a teacher is such a huge responsibility. Setting an example to students is almost if not as important as "teaching" them material. For elementary students, this is the time where outside influences shape who they are a great deal. What you say, what you do, all of this has an effect on the students in one way shape or form, to look at that

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responsibility lightly could prove to be very negative to the kids.
If someone wants to become a teacher that may not be so naturally inclined, if they truly wanted to be a teacher, and put forth the effort, hopefully the teachers they have are good at what they do, and will influence that individual. I do beleive however that there has to at least be a natural ability with kids, otherwise it may be difficult to get them to listen and learn if they are unable to relate to the teacher. J. Barnes

posted 05-03-00 11:50 AM ET (US)

I believe that "good teaching" is somewhat of a natural born skill. I've seen some younger people that can teach a person a concept or a skill where some people try but fail time after time. These people aren't teachers or had the classes to learn teaching skills. And to say that parents teach their children how to teach is unbelievable... or is it? I think that being a great teacher involves certain intellegences such as social intellegence, interpersonal intellegence and the like. "smart people" with spacial intellegences or something to that nature may not do as well, teaching. So in fact, teachers with C averages in college may be more effective than teachers with A averages because they may be more people oriented and they may be able to see multiple perspectives on ways to learn. In college classes, everyone learns that we need to do to be good teachers, but when actually in front of the class it's a different story. After a couple years of experience, the "worse" teachers may learn what do to and what not to do, where as the "better" teachers may be good right from the start. I also believe that how one was raised may react with what kind of intellegence someone may have. So parents may be teaching their children a thing or two (without them knowing) about how to be good teachers.

posted 05-03-00 01:44 PM ET (US)

I will add a little more to my first comment. After watching the movie Dangerous Minds in class the difference between a good teacher and a great teacher is apparent in the two teachers in the movie. The guy (can't remeber his name) is a good teacher, he is sharing his knowledge with his class and they are learning. Lee Ann on the other hand is a great teacher, she gears her lessons toward the students intrests or things they can relate to(death) and she is concerned on a personal level about all of the students. She goes over and beyond the call of duty in trying to make the kids feel important. So true compassion and concern make a great teacher. Hope

posted 05-03-00 05:18 PM ET (US)

I believe that good teachers are "naturally born" to teach. In order to be an effective teacher you have to be patient, caring, optimistic, passionate, dedicated, responsible, and trustworthy. If you were not born with these qualities, no one can teach them to you. Of course, anybody can take classes that teach you teaching theories and strategies, but is that all it takes to be a great teacher? I don't believe so. Good teachers have to want to teach. Being a teacher is a lot of work, and just because you took college education courses does not mean that you will be able to make the children learn. Children will be able to sense if you enjoy being a teacher, and they in return will have respect for you. So I believe successful teachers were born to teach!

posted 05-05-00 04:58 PM ET (US)

I agree with Hope. There is a difference between an educator and a teacher. Refering to one of my earlier comments I said that there was a difference between educators and teachers. For me, this is shown in the movie. Lee Ann is a great teacher because not only did she get them to learn the material but she did it on their level. Teaching is just when someone is able to get a child to be able to do something. Educating a child is being able to get a chile to do that over and over again, For instance, in the movie, when they had the contest "The Dylan-Dylan contest" They are taking what their knowledge and expanding it. Nicole N.

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posted 05-05-00 06:30 PM ET (US)

I don't believe that there are any natural born teachers, but I do believe that some people are better teachers because of the way they are raised. Exceptional teachers need to have compassion and a heart to teach, and this isn't something that can be taught in the classroom, but rather something that is taught by modeling. I do believe that some people will never make good teachers, regardless of how much training they have received. You do have to have "book sense" to teach, but a lot of common sense is also needed, and some people just don't have it.
Melissa Walker

[This message has been edited by Walkerme (edited 05-05-00).]

posted 05-07-00 04:46 PM ET (US)

I believe there are teachers out there who have been blessed with the natural ability to teach and to express ideas clearly so that a group of students will understand concepts. However, I think most teachers are not naturally gifted. The thing that sticks out in my mind that makes good teachers good is caring about students and having passionate feeelings to want to help these students learn and have them eventually succeed in life. It is like anything else in life, in order to be good at something you have to care and be committed 100 per cent. If you have that frame of mind you can become whatever you want to be. Even if you may not have all the skills that are necessary to be a good teacher. If you have the desire and the genuine care for the students you teach, the results will take care of themselves. A good teacher will find a way to help students learn and understand things. Yes, there are other skills involved such as patience, knowledge, discipline, communication, and perseverance, but the most essential element is the desire to care for your students and help them succeed. My number one goal as a future teacher is to make sure my students are prepared to succeed in the real world. That covers everything from basic knowledge of subject material to social skills to how to handle adversity and problems to critical thinking skills. If I am able to accomplish those things, my students should have a great opportunity to succeed in life.

posted 05-08-00 05:19 PM ET (US)

I would like to tack on a bit more to my first response. I want to go back to whether or not teaching is a gift. Like I said before, teaching is indeed a gift, but just because you have it does not mean you will automatically become a great teacher. Those who have been given this gift still need to refine adn improve upon what they already posess. For instance, I believe that without a doubt, surgeons have been blessed with a gift, but would you want to be operated on by one who has a "gift", but hasn't learned how to use it to teh best of his/her ability?? Why then would we settle for just having a gift? It is those who committ themselves to life-long learning, as well as life-long teaching. Are you ~~studing to~~ be a good teacher or a great one???

posted 05-08-00 06:36 PM ET (US)

I want to say that YES there are some people who are "naturals", and YES others can learn to be teachers.
I think that some people are gifted in teaching, yet even the gifted need instruction to refine their skills. Certainly some surgeons are born with a steady hand and a keen eye, but we wouldn't want him operating with those skills alone. There are some things about being a teacher that you can only learn through doing, and it's these skills that we are attempting to learn through observation and traditional classes.

posted 05-09-00 02:19 PM ET (US)

I think that anyone can be a teacher but in order to be an effective teacher you must

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have the gift. I had a high school teacher who tole me I would never be a math teacher and that is exactly what I am doing. His methods of getting his students involved in the lesson were dehumanizing. If you did not know the answer he proded you and kept on you in front of the whole class before he moved on. Could he teach? Yes based on the fact that I got a B in his course, but he could not teach effectivly.
An effective teacher is one who goes outside of the lesson plan to know their students needs and meet them in all ways possible. An effective teacher is one who can maintain the ever wearying attention of the students, and can discipline properly and individually. Anyone can teach, but not everyone can teach effectivly. That is one reason we have programs like DARE. It is hard to teach about drugs for some people so we have specialists who know hwat needs to be communicated.

posted 05-15-00 12:10 AM ET (US)

I think that teaching is not something people can really be taught. It is a natural thing. Teachers must be competent in a variety of areas, such as psychology, methods, and the area of content that they teach. But I feel that this is only a fraction of what teachers do. Teachers are there as an outlet for some children, a friend for others, and sometimes they are the only ones that can help children when the child is in need. Also our teachers are preparing the youth for the real world. Many of these things are not able tio be taught in a classroom, they are qualities that people have.

posted 05-16-00 09:46 AM ET (US)

I found this and thought you all might like it to. Some people have greatness thrust upon them. Very few have excellence thrust upon them - they achieve it. I liked what this had to say.
Melissa Walker

posted 05-16-00 06:11 PM ET (US)

Sure, I think that some people have more of a natural gift for teaching than others. However, I also feel that if a person has the desire to teach then they also can be good teachers. People who want to teach have a love for the profession and the children. There are many other professions out there that are easier and franlkly that pay more for the same amount of schooling that teachers must go through. So if a person is going to school so that they may become a teacher then there is obviously a reason other than money or social status. This is not to say that there are no bad teacher out there because I am sure that there are. But I like to think that the people that go into the teaching profession are going into it for the right reasons. Those of us who are aspiring teacher now must also now that we have our work cut out for us. With all of the violoence and drugs etc. that we are seeing in our schools today I feel that the future teachers are people who have the drive and love of the profession.

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